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ABSTRACT

This paper explores, in an Australian context, effective multicultural curriculum strategies which can be developed at the school level. Many factors which impinge upon curriculum development and outcomes are beyond the control of individual schools, including state multicultural education policy and its relationship to more general curriculum policy, funding procedures, the narrow orientation of some teacher education, school staffing policies, and competing social education goals. Most educators agree that multicultural education should promote tolerance and intercultural understanding. However, teaching about "different cultures" can still leave students blind to society's inequalities and how they are perpetuated. Fundamentals of good multicultural education include attention to (1) the community's social composition and climate; (2) quality English language teaching; (3) compulsory learning of a language other than English; (4) incorporation of multicultural perspectives into existing school subjects; (5) students' personal development; (6) involvement of all parents; (7) use of bias-free instructional materials and resources; and (8) avoidance of cultural misunderstanding or racism in the treatment of minority students and staff. School policymakers should welcome input from staff, parents, and students, use information on the school community, understand the school as an organization, work through the existing curriculum to develop multicultural perspectives, and realize the importance of teaching methods and classroom interactions. Documentation and dissemination of successful programs is vital. 8 references. (SV)

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NACCME COMMISSIONED RESEARCH PAPER NO 2

Development of Curriculum Strategies for Schools in Multicultural Education

by

Kathy Skelton

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NACCME COMMISSIONED RESEARCH PAPER NO.2

DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUM STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION.

BY

KATHY SKELTON

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NACCME

NATIONAL ADVISORY AND CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE ON MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

PREFACE

The National Advisory and Co-ordinating Committee on Multicultural Education (NACCME) was established by the Minister for Education (and Youth Affairs), Senator Susan Ryan, on 27 March 1984, following from the Government's acceptance of Recommendation 29 of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs Evaluation of Post-Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants (May 1985).

NACCME's Terms of Reference are to:

(i) advise the Minister for Education on matters relating to multicultural education;

(ii) co-ordinate, monitor and review multicultural programs and activities;

(iii) determine an appropriate procedure for information exchange and put that procedure into practice.

NACCME's main function is to provide advice on the needs of multicultural education across a broad spectrum, from pre-school to higher education and information education mechanisms such as the media. The Commonwealth Department of Education provides the Secretariat for the Committee.

At its inaugural meeting, Senator Ryan suggested that the Committee develop a major policy document on multicultural education, and this was taken up as a major task for NACCME over the past three years. On 26 May 1987 NACCME's policy document Education In and For a Multicultural Society: Issues and Strategies for Policy Making was officially launched.

In developing this major policy document NACCME sought input from outside experts by commissioning a number of background research papers.

NACCME is pleased to now release a series of seven papers comprising eight commissioned research papers which had direct input into our own document.

We hope that these papers will add to the pool of information available on, and constructive discussion of, issues in multicultural education.

The views expressed in these papers are not necessarily those of NACCME itself.

This paper entitled Development of Curriculum Strategies for Schools in Multicultural Education is by Kathy Skelton, Project Officer for the Combatting Prejudice in Schools Project at the Richmond Community Education Centre in Melbourne.

This is the second paper of the NACCME Commissioned Research Papers Series.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

NACCME asked Ms Skelton to prepare a paper of 3,000 to 5,000 words on the development of curriculum strategies for schools in multicultural education which suggests strategies that:

- have a sound basis in learning theory and curriculum process;
- have a coherent underlying rationale;
- are related to the realities of the children's lives in and out of school, including the working lives of their parents; and
- incorporate concerns about equity.

The paper, prepared in 1985, is a preliminary background paper and does not, of course, take into account further developmental work done by Ms Skelton in the recent past.

DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUM STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Factors affecting curriculum development and outcomes

While the major concern of this paper is to explore effective curriculum strategies which can be developed at the school level, it would be ignoring the obvious to imply that what happens in individual schools is simply the outcome of factors operating there.

Lawrence Stenhouse, an English teacher, curriculum developer and researcher, with a particular interest in race relations, argues that in education:

> *...we are dealing with situations which contain many variables, and over a wide range of subjects it holds true that the curriculum is not the most important variable to be taken into account in attempting to understand the results of curriculum development. Failure to recognise this is the greatest weakness in curriculum research.* (Stenhouse, 1975.)

The formulation and dissemination of multicultural education policy from the centre is one such variable. While it is vital that such policy be educationally and ideologically sound, addressing issues of equity and participation as well as diversity, this in itself carries no guarantees that such a policy will be adopted or implemented at the local school level.

Secondly, how the policy relates to more general curriculum policy is also an important consideration. Separate policies in areas like multiculturalism and anti-sexism, particularly if they come with no in-built mechanisms for ensuring that schools address these areas, often mean that schools regard them as peripheral or 'optional' extras, to be taken up because money is available, or because some enthusiastic teacher has an interest in them, or because the racism and/or sexism of the students means such issues can no longer be ignored.

In Victoria, while statements on multicultural education have been issued from time to time by a variety of educational bodies, the most important so far is that contained in *Ministerial Paper Number 6: Curriculum Development and Planning in Victoria.* It is important because issues of multicultural education (including the rights of students of non-English speaking background not to be discriminated against by the practices of the school and to have their cultural and linguistic backgrounds positively valued) are embodied in the curriculum guidelines, rather than treated in a separate section and are directed towards all students and all school communities.

Secondly, because of the ministerial authority attaching to the document and because the paper is unequivocal in its intentions - to give a clear sense of direction to all schools - many school councils and teachers have initiated and been involved in the process of discussing and reviewing their school programs, initially at least, in the light of the paper's directives.

Further, curriculum support personnel from a wide range of subject areas and backgrounds have been involved in the process of assisting schools to review their curricula and to begin the process of translating the paper's recommendations into more concrete practice. Given the range of issues and concerns addressed in the guidelines the experience of assisting schools in this way is an educative one and means that issues of multicultural education are beginning to become the concern of a more diverse group than those designated 'multicultural' consultants.

None of this is to suggest that the Ministerial Paper is the definitive document on multicultural education. Nor is it to suggest that the task of giving students of all backgrounds better access to and greater success in schooling will be an easy or speedy affair. Much will depend, at both the school and support levels, on the commitment of key personnel and decision-makers to ensuring that application of the guidelines to curricula planning is rigorous and on-going. However, two important factors have begun to be addressed in this Victorian development - the placing of what might be termed 'multicultural issues' in mainstream curriculum thinking and attention to the processes by which such curriculum policy is made available to schools.

There are other factors beyond the control of individual schools which impinge upon how curriculum is developed and what outcomes it eventually leads to - in particular funding procedures, teacher education, staffing policies and competing claims within the school curriculum.

Funding for multicultural education made available to schools presents something of dilemma. On the one hand schools need money to pay for teacher time-release, course development, production of materials or outside expertise. On the other, because so much of what might be termed multicultural education has been funded in this way it has encouraged the view that it is, of necessity, dependent on such funding and has encouraged its marginalisation centrally and in many school programs.

The answer is not to dispense with targeted funding but to ensure that funded initiatives are required to also direct their attention to both the capacity of the program to be sustained in the school and to influence other areas of the curriculum, and the processes by which this might be achieved.

Two broad approaches that funding bodies might adopt here are to incorporate into submission guidelines the requirement that these issues be examined and to encourage the funding of clusters of schools who, with appropriate support, can share and reflect upon their experience.

The 'multicultural components' of teacher education - both in training and post training courses - are undoubtedly more numerous that they were ten years ago, but are still largely optional components of courses. This means teachers can emerge from their training with little understanding or awareness of the issues in this area, with their prejudices and misconceptions largely intact, and in secondary schools particularly, a narrow subject orientation towards their role as a teacher.

This has contributed to the notion that non-English speaking background students are largely the responsibility of ESL staff or ethnic-aides in the school and that 'multicultural education' (teaching about culture and migration)

is largely the province of teachers in the humanities area. Thus the perspective encouraged by training priorities combines with teacher attitudes to further marginalise issues which should have a much more central place in schooling.

Staffing policies, particularly as they apply to the appointment of senior staff and administrators, have an important influence on efforts towards any curriculum change. Even in the most democratic schools, teachers in these positions are frequently key decision makers and opinion shapers whose priorities, whether consciously or unconsciously displayed, can determine both the support and status accorded any new curriculum initiatives.

Whether such personnel are selected at the school level (as in the case of Victorian secondary schools) or by more traditional, bureaucratic procedures, trying to ensure that schools have leadership with an understanding of issues of multiculturalism and an active commitment to their appropriate implementation is still very much a hit-and-miss affair.

The importance of informed leadership in schools cannot be underestimated, particularly in view of the need for questions of access, equity and respect for diversity to be addressed across the school.

If I could introduce a personal reflection relevant to the importance of the quality of school leadership of all the schools I have worked with in the past two years one of the few able to take a 'whole school' approach to challenging prejudice and racism has been one in which the school vice-principal has played an active role. He has been an active member of the school committee which directs the 'program' and regularly articulates his views to all members of the school community.

While I would not want to suggest that his participation and commitment have been the determining factors in the school being able to initiate and sustain a diversity of approaches to combating prejudice, the work of the most active teachers has gained support, status and a high profile across the school.

Finally, areas of knowledge of specific issues making competing claims for inclusion in the school curriculum are ever increasing. The degree to which schools will make a firm commitment and concerted effort in a particular areas will not only depend on how pressing or relevant the issue is seen to be, but also what other claims are being made simultaneously.

For example, peace education, development education, political literacy, computer education, Aboriginal education, anti-racist education and developing multicultural perspectives across the curriculum are to some degree in competition with each other. They are competing for the scarce and valuable inservice days available to schools and for the little time available to teachers to plan new courses, adapt old ones or develop new units of work.

Certainly, there are issues central to most of these areas which would tend to suggest that the goals of all such areas could be incorporated into a broad social education program. However, the different emphases of each of these areas, the particular perspectives of teachers who take an interest in such issues, and the fact that their inclusion in the school curriculum is lobbied for at both the central and school levels, means that the possibilities for co-ordination are often not developed.

Consideration of factors largely beyond the control of individual schools, yet influencing the outcome of curriculum development and contributing to the educational experience of all students is important.

Too often when programs developed within schools are assessed and found to have no lasting impact or not to have achieved their aims, it is assumed that the fault lies in the programs - the materials weren't good enough, the teaching strategies weren't appropriate, not enough teachers were involved - while factors outside the program itself which might have impinged upon its development are not considered at all.

The Cahill review of the Commonwealth Multicultural Education Program found, among other things, that:

> *approximately one quarter of the school-based projects in the fifty schools randomly selected by the Team were classified as unsuccessful either because they failed to achieve their aims or the program had not had an enduring impact.*

The Review concluded that:

> *at the school level much needs to be done to facilitate the implementation of high-quality programs and to improve the capacity of teachers to understand the multicultural perspective in education.* (Cahill, et.al, 1984.)

More teachers undoubtedly need a more informed understanding of the multicultural perspective in education and high-quality programs must certainly be encouraged but essential to working towards both these goals is a need for teachers to examine the school as an organisation and a community, to consider what are the obstacles to change within the school and ways of circumventing or overcoming these, and to take account of broad principles of curriculum development.

Defining multicultural education

> *Equality...cannot be achieved through cultural diversity; it cannot be removed from the realm of politics. To aim at mutual tolerance - whether in the classroom or in society at large - without also aiming at an increased understanding and firm rejection of the existing state of inequality, is an attempt at ideological control.* (Nixon, 1985.)

The findings of the Cahill review reveal that principals, teachers, members of school governing/advisory bodies and ethnic community leaders all agree that:

> *the most important aspect of multicultural education is 'educating all children about tolerance, harmony and intercultural understanding.*

This is a laudable and worthwhile aim of any educational program, particularly in a society as diverse as Australia's However, two things need to be said about it. Firstly, promoting tolerance and intercultural understanding can still leave students blind to the inequality that characterises our society and without any real understanding of its basis or how it is perpetuated. Teaching students about Vietnamese culture and customs, for example, won't necessarily prevent students exhibiting racist attitudes or behaviour when their job prospects seem bleak or uncertain.

Secondly, educating for tolerance and cultural understanding seems to have been universally interpreted as teaching about 'different cultures'. In view of the fact that culture is dynamic, influenced by the process and experience of migration, that there is *widespread lack of understanding that the concept of ethnicity belongs to all students* and that *the general knowledge of teachers about Australia's ethnic groups is seriously deficient* (Cahill, et.al, 1984), there is little wonder that such teaching comes with no guarantees of positively influencing attitudes and in some instances meets with outright hostility from students regardless of their background.

This is not to suggest that all reference to 'cultural diversity' should be removed from the school curriculum, but rather that how this diversity is acknowledge and how respect for it is developed and how it is related to issues of equality/inequality needs to be much more carefully considered.

Schooling, in its provision, should not discriminate, either actively or by omission, against identifiable groups of students on the basis of ethnicity, language or gender. (I would add 'class' to this list, but it seems to me that the whole education system discriminates on the basis of class and individual schools can only make a minimal difference in this area.)

School organisation, policy and practice should embody a commitment to equity for all students and through the curriculum offered, regardless of the nature of the school community, seek to foster this same commitment in students and develop their understanding of the diverse society in which they live. The learning experiences provided for students as well as the content of the curriculum will be central to this process.

Before suggesting ways in which schools might be more sound and effective in their approach to multicultural education, I would like to briefly explore an issue already raised indirectly in this paper (bottom of page 7) and one which has to be considered if schools are to be constantly charged with making the outcomes of schooling more equitable for all students.

For schools to make a significant difference to the life chances of groups that have been traditionally disadvantaged and to develop all students' understanding of the society in which they live so that they are **able and willing to act on that understanding** requires the transformation of schools into institutions that are largely at odds with the society they serve; espousing and reflecting values that are not generally held in the wider community nor reflected in the structure of society.

Society is not characterised by equality and the school system certainly reflects this. Ronald Mendelsohn, writing about social reform in Australia - which is surely pertinent to considerations of both equity and multiculturalism - comments that Australia

> *...has an unusually high proportion of children in privileged, private education....Socially, the division of education into public and private sectors has meant the perpetuation of inequality...*

In fact, he advises that,

> *...if your aim is to secure for your children an economic and social life above average send them to private schools; the government will pay a large part of your costs.* (Mendelshohn, 1985.)

Issues of state and private education are complex ones and not properly the subject of this paper, however Mendelsohn's comments highlight the task facing individual schools.

A high school in the western suburbs of Sydney or Melbourne, with a significant population of non-English speaking background students has an uphill battle to make a difference to the life chances of such students, or indeed of many of its students regardless of their background.

Provision of a quality ESL program, serious provision of community language teaching, giving Aboriginal issues, migration and respect for diversity a central place in the curriculum, monitoring of grouping and assessment procedures for their capacity to discriminate unfairly, and on-going dialogue with parents of all backgrounds can certainly make a difference to the quality of life of a school and the likelihood that students of all backgrounds will have a positive schooling experience. It is not likely, however, to lead to a serious challenge to the capacity of the private school across the river or harbour to place more students in tertiary education and 'good' jobs.

Secondly, the development of certain understandings in students comes with no guarantees of being translated into action or commitment. This is reflected in some English research into the views of two and a half thousand fifteen and sixteen year olds in the West Midlands in 1983. Interviews revealed a significant proportion of respondents with an awareness of the nature of prejudice, an acknowledgement of its unfairness but a preparedness to tolerate discrimination based upon it, if this appeared to increase their own opportunities:

> *You'd think at our ages we wouldn't be colour prejudiced because we've been to school with them. We're not really, but things have happened....I mean we're leaving school soon and half the jobs have gone...I've got friends who would like to stay in this country, but if it was either get them all out or keep them all in, I'd rather get them all out...* (Cochrane and Billig, 1984.)

The task for schools is not an easy one and it seems to me that the more socially and economically vulnerable the community served by a school, the more difficult is the task. However, whatever the constraints, schools can make schooling more equitable within their own organisation and can make a contribution to the capacity of all students to work co-operatively, to make decisions and take the kind of action which might positively influence their adult life, to respect the rights of others, to acknowledge their personal attitudes and the way these have been shaped, together with the more traditionally understood purposes of schooling.

Aspects of sound multicultural practice

The salient features of good multicultural practice are relevant to all school communities and students though how they are interpreted or implemented in different schools will vary. So too will the approaches employed in their development and the teaching strategies and classroom materials adopted.

> *It is clearly highly unlikely that the same materials and the same teaching strategy would be desirable in a multi-racial inner urban school in which two racial groups are strongly represented, a multi-racial school in which three racial groups are strongly represented, and a rural school in which pupils have little contact with any cultures other than that of their own locality. Moreover, if a school has a multi-racial neighbourhood to serve, it probably matters for the design of curriculum and teaching whether there is in that neighbourhood relative harmony, an uneasy truce or acute tension.* (Stenhouse, 1975.)

While this observation has clearly been made in the context of English society and schooling it is certainly not without its relevance to the Australian situation. Attempting to challenge prejudice against a particular group requires quite different approaches when numbers of that group are present in the school and community and when they are not, for example. even within schools, if a particular class is characterised by hostility or 'distance' between particular students a unit of work on migration which has worked successfully elsewhere in the school could well meet with failure - measured by constant prejudice from the students and hostile reaction to the subject matter.

This does not mean that some sort of blueprint can be devised which could then be neatly applied to schools on the basis of some sort of analysis of their social composition and community climate. Rather it means that wherever and however teachers are encouraged to think about multicultural education, whether it be through publications, training courses, inservice education, or policy guidelines, they should also be encouraged to think about their school community.

It is much more difficult, for example, for schools with few students of non-English speaking background or few Aboriginal students to make multicultural education, at least those aspects of it designed to develop understandings and challenge attitudes, personally relevant to their students.

> *...Pupils in non multi-racial schools are still members of a multicultural society and that, as such, they require an education which prepares them for life in such a society. This argument, however, does not fully resolve the problem: it asserts the social relevance of multicultural education without explaining how it can become personally relevant for those in non multi-racial areas.* (Nixon, 1985.)

How to make such education relevant will be a task for curriculum planners in such schools while those in schools with a diverse student population will be grappling with how to promote more positive interaction between students of different backgrounds or how best to introduce content which touches on the very nature of the community of which the school is a part.

Having suggested why there will be differences in the way schools take up the issues of multicultural education and develop the curriculum, there are some fundamental yardsticks against which all schools can measure what they offer students:

Provision of good English language teaching - In some schools this will mean a quality ESL program, not confined to the recently arrived, and an awareness of language issues among all teaching staff. This second requirement necessitates major inservicing or re-training of most teachers. However, it could make a significant difference to the school experience of all students, and in particular, students of non-English speaking background.

Compulsory learning of a language other than English - including the opportunity to study the major languages of the local community. Many community language programs are short-lived, peripheral or non-existent in mainstream schooling because language learning, generally, has little status within Australian schooling. It needs to be compulsory in the way that Maths, Science and English are to acquire that status and attract permanent funding and staffing.

Students whose first language is not English are being denied the opportunity of becoming functioning bi-linguals in a way that is either personally satisfying or vocationally useful when they are unable to study their first language at school or can only study it in weekend of after school programs.

The logistics of community language teaching in mainstream education are not easy - some schools have twenty different first languages represented in them. But that seems to be a problem to be solved after making a commitment in principle rather than a reason for not changing the status quo.

Perspectives across the curriculum that acknowledge the diversity of our society and the inequality that characterises that diversity - The following areas of study should be incorporated into existing school subjects (History, Geography, Social Studies, English, Politics, Work Education, Legal Studies) and be offered to all students at some stage in their schooling: Aboriginal history, culture and contemporary issues; the history and experience of migration to Australia; the history, function and personal experience of prejudice and racism; the study of concepts by which we interpret society and personal experience, e.g. culture, gender, identity, socialisation.

Attention to the personal development of all students - Encouraging students to share and reflect upon their cultural background through appropriate classroom activities or through special provisions for pastoral care; conscious attention to the opportunities for positive interaction; sensitive established procedures for assisting the arrival of new students in the school.

Provision for all parents to participate in school decision making and commitment to on-going dialogue with all parents - This means not only that interpreters and translations are provided automatically but that there are genuine opportunities for school bodies having parent representation to adequately reflect the nature of the school community. For schools with predominantly Anglo-Celtic populations it means discussing multicultural issues and their incorporation in the curriculum with parents.

The ways in which students are grouped, assessed and disciplined all need to be examined for their potential to discriminate against identifiable groups of students - If a school practises 'streaming' across all subjects or within subjects who are the students in the different streams? Are girls or boys of non-English speaking background disproportionately represented in any one stream? Are written tests and examinations the main form of assessment and do they disadvantage those students who are still acquiring English? Are discipline matters involving students of non-English speaking background always examined for the possibilities of cultural misunderstanding or racism? Is there an awareness that these might be implicit in a teacher's or administrator's handling of such incidents?

Materials and resources used in the school should reflect the cultural diversity of our society and be generally free of bias that is racist or sexist - This means that library staff and those who choose materials for use in different subject areas need to consciously choose books and materials that don't convey an ethnocentric or mono-cultural perspective on everything, nor perpetuate myths or stereotypes about different groups in society. Given that few books and materials are totally devoid of bias, teachers need ways of developing their students' critical awareness of this.

The role and status of non-English speaking background teachers and ancillary staff should not be substantially different from that of other staff - While teachers and other staff of non-English speaking background are often numerically in a minority on the staff they should have the same rights in terms of position of authority and decision making as other staff members.

Students of all backgrounds need some access to decision making in the school and some forum in which they can air their grievances and make their views known - The rhetoric of student participation is considerably easier than the practice, but the more students can contribute to the way schools are run and the rules by which they operate, the more likely they are to respect the rights of all within the school. Secondly, students who are the victims of unfair treatment, on whatever basis, need some means of raising their concern. Thirdly, a curriculum which spells out the need for respect and tolerance will not be served by a school climate which does not offer the same respect and tolerance in some measure to students.

Curriculum Strategies

> *On the one hand the curriculum is seen as an intention, plan or prescription, an idea about what one would like to happen in schools. On the other it is seen as the existing stage of affairs in schools, what does in fact happen...Our educational realities seldom conform to our educational intentions. We cannot put our policies into practice...Students in training often notice a gap between the educationalist and the school not unlike that between Haig's headquarters and the mud of Flanders. So many seem elated by the discussion of educational ideas: so few are encouraged by close critical scrutiny of their own classrooms. The gap between aspiration and practice is a real and frustrating one...The gap can <u>only</u> be closed by adopting a research and development approach to one's own teaching, whether alone or in a group of co-operating teachers.* (Stenhouse, 1975.)

It is within the framework of this perspective on curriculum development that the following strategies are put forward.

1. **Development of a school policy**

> Stenhouse, as a result of his curriculum research into schooling and race relations, hypothesises that *the influence of school and social context is not likely to reinforce inter-racial tolerance in the absence of actions or policies actively designed to do so.* (Stenhouse, 1982.)

A school policy in multicultural education, written by a small group of teachers and 'rubber-stamped' by the school council is only marginally better than useless.

But one that is discussed by all staff, contributed to by parents and students and widely and effectively publicised within the school community (for example, with a public launching or a series of articles in the local press) can not only help schools articulate their interpretation of centrally determined policy, but can heighten the awareness and encourage the commitment of all members of the school community.

Such policy development should be considered in relation to other policy areas so that the same process does not have to be repeated with each issue or area that warrants attention and so that the relationships between issues and their policy implications are understood and co-ordinated. Furthermore, different schools will undoubtedly produce different policies or policies with different emphases in response to their own needs - some will need, for example, to pay detailed attention to issues of racial harrassment while others will only need passing reference to this issue within a more general statement on the rights of individuals within the school.

As with many other areas in education, once a particular practice or course of action becomes part of the rhetoric or 'received wisdom' there is a very real danger that many schools will go through the motions in an area like policy development. Therefore, should funding be made available to schools, either to aid the process or to encourage documentation of it, there should be particular emphasis on the process by which such policies are developed, disseminated, reassessed and reaffirmed.

Should good school policies and stories of their development be publicised, the kind of schools and communities in which they are developed should also be known.

2. **Researching the school community and making use of this in curriculum development**

Most schools have some fundamental information on their students and families - gender, age, language spoken at home, years in Australia, numbers of single parents - some schools are better at collecting it than others. However, it is usually only made use of for departmental returns or when submissions call for some kind of statistical justification of particular requests.

It is sometimes used to inform curriculum discussions but usually not in a way that draws the attention of all the staff to the nature of the community they serve. For example, some Careers teachers, though not nearly enough, keep records of the destinations of school leavers for the first twelve months after they leave school, but rarely is this dissected and discussed by staff as a basis for examining what the school offers or how it is organised.

There is not only a role for quantitative data of this kind but also for more qualitative evidence - in such areas as: parent/student aspirations, student attitudes to a variety of educational issues and experiences, community perceptions of the school and so on.

Such research could be carried out by tertiary students undertaking appropriate courses of study (perhaps making a contribution to their formal assessment), senior students within the school as part of their formal study, a teacher with time-release, an interested parent or group of parents, or some unemployed ex-students paid through a CEP grant.

The purpose of such research is, in some instances, to provide a more definitive picture of an area that is of particular concern to the school and, in others, to provide teachers and others with some 'concrete' information drawn directly from the school community which serves as a starting point for curriculum discussion and reappraisal.

To illustrate this last point: a Melbourne high school, concerned about the issue of student prejudice and inter-group hostility, found that teacher discussion of the matter centred largely on generalities with teachers assuming they all shared the same perceptions of what was happening in the student population.

A committee of teachers, with some students and 'outside' representation also, was set up to take responsibility for guiding the school's approach to this issue. The committee decided to offer a placement to a tertiary youth work student to conduct small group, informal discussions across all year levels and ethnic backgrounds to provide a 'picture' of student attitudes.

Her report, together with passages from the discussion transcripts have been used to get teachers to explore the issues in a more detailed and complex way, and will subsequently be used with parents, students and bodies like the school council.

3. **Understanding the school as an organisation**

Some part of all teacher development and inservice programs need to consider this area. What part does the size of the school, the grouping of students, timetable priorities and elective programs, for example, play in fostering or working against attention to the multicultural dimension of education?

How to effect change within the school and recognise the obstacles to so doing need to be considered by small groups wanting to achieve wider consideration of particular concerns within the school and by teachers who have taken part in some relevant inservice program and want the school, as a whole, to take up the issues.

> *A curriculum...involves both content and method, and in its widest application takes account of the problem of implementation in the institutions of the educational system.* (Stenhouse, 1975.)

4. **Work through the existing curriculum to develop multicultural perspectives**

This does not mean no new courses but it does mean no separate subjects called 'multicultural education' or 'cultural studies'. Secondly, the areas of study referred to in the first paragraph on page 11, should not be offered as part of an elective program unless all students take all electives at some time and unless the elective program is a serious and permanent part of the curriculum and not a device to cope with staff shortages or timetable vagaries.

Working through the existing curriculum is less threatening to teachers resistant to change and means new or modified courses are more likely to remain a permanent part of the school curriculum and less likely to be seen as peripheral by both staff and students.

However, such modifications or developments, if they are to be more than superificial, will require some accountability on the part of individual teachers and faculties to approach the task with thoroughness. If such change is sponsored by the school curriculum committee the chances that it will be approached seriously and have 'spin-offs' elsewhere in the school are made more likely.

If such curriculum review is not initiated by such a committee, then the faculty or teachers involved should seek the committee's services in evaluating their efforts. This offers the teachers wanting to change the curriculum some support, it gives their efforts the status of a serious initiative, and it automatically extends involvement with the issues beyond the original group.

A large Humanities department in a Victorian technical school, characterised by departmental fragmentation, gained time-release for one of its own teachers to survey how all teachers within the department addressed (or did not address) issues of multicultural education in the courses they offered.

She used a combination of written questionnaire and personal interview and presented her findings in a one-day departmental inservice in which 'outside' consultants also participated. Practical workshops in which teachers work on their existing courses are planned as the next stage of this process.

While it will be some considerable time before this experience reaches the rest of the school, given its fragmented nature, this initiative and the gaining of time-release has been largely the work of the teacher concerned. Yet it has now reached the stage where there is considerable chance of improving courses and heightening teacher awareness across the faculty.

5. **Positive publicity for individual projects can lead to curriculum change**

Where only a small group of people are committed to developing the multicultural perspective of the school curriculum, there is considerable argument for them going ahead in a small way and publicising their aims, their experience and their achievements.

Brief reports on bulletins, at staff meetings, to school councils and curriculum committees, meetings for the parents of the students involved, coverage in the local press, and articles in teacher publications, can reflect favourably on a school and create a more receptive climate within it for initiating wider change. People not involved in the project want to share in its 'ownership' and this should be actively encouraged by project initiators as a way of extending the project's influence.

Of course, one would not want to publicise projects that have little to recommend them, but there is rarely a school-based initiative so poor that something cannot be salvaged and developed from it, nor one so good in the initial stages that its weaknesses are not obvious in retrospect. The value of the publicity is the focus it gives to the issues and the encouragement it gives to those involved.

6. **Teaching methods and classroom interactions are as important as teaching materials**

> *As typically conducted, teaching is an opportunistic process. That is to say neither the teacher nor his students can predict with any certainty what will happen next...Stray thoughts, sudden insights, meandering digressions, irrelevant asides, and other minor disruptions constantly ruffle the smoothness of the instructional dialogue. Experienced teachers accept this state of affairs and come to look upon surprise or uncertainty as natural features of their environment. They know, or come to know, that the path of educational progress more closely resembles the flight of a butterfly than the flight of a bullet.* (Jackson, 1968.)

> *It is a common experience in curriculum development work that teaching materials are perceived as an easy solution to classroom problems.* (Stenhouse, 1982.)

Good materials are always needed but efforts to produce or acquire them often dominate teachers' approaches to curriculum development, while not enough attention is paid to how the materials might be presented and handled.

Questions that teachers need to ask as they plan courses, and as they teach them, and as they talk about the experience with each other, are: Should students enquire into this topic? Would discussion in small groups be the best way of exploring this issue? Have students had any opportunities to work on a group in this course? Is my authority as a teacher getting in the way of our discussion of this issue? Should we jointly discuss some ground rules for discussion at the beginning of this topic? Would a team approach be best here?

When teachers are involved in producing and trialling materials and courses, they should also be encouraged to document how the materials are used, how students respond, how changes in approaches are decided. Teachers frequently share courses and textbooks but all too rarely is the experience of actually teaching shared.

The Social Literacy Project, developed and based in New South Wales, shows a strong commitment to the need for good materials embodying worthwhile content - in this case the concepts needed for understanding and examining society. Certainly materials have been rigorously drafted, trialled and redrafted. At the same time those participating in the project acknowledge that the discussion of classroom practice, generated by the materials, is as important as the materials themselves.

Co-operative work aimed at promoting more positive interaction between students needs to be much more a feature of classroom teaching; small group discussion of controversial issues rather than discussion which always goes through the teacher needs to be encouraged. Wherever appropriate students should be encouraged to enquire into areas that challenge their attitudes rather than being told 'these are the facts' or 'this is what you should think'. Issues of inequality, racism, prejudice and immigration can all be explored 'away from home' so that students have a chance to consider them as issues before facing material that might be more personally challenging. The use of film, literature and guest speakers willing to share their personal experience can promote empathy without prescribing a response from students. The creation of plays or films can develop students' capacity to see things from the perspective of other people - so too can drama and role play. Studying issues of immigration and diversity can be done in the context of the local community to make the connection between classroom learning and the world outside. Cross-age tutoring programs involving ethnically different students can reduce prejudice.

All these teaching strategies have the capacity to positively contribute to the way students respond to or interact with curriculum. However, they come with no guarantees nor is there any sense in which one strategy can be considered more likely to be successful than another - certainly not without also considering the class of student involved and the content of the course. That is what makes detailed exploration of these strategies without reference to a concrete program in a school setting very difficult.

7. **Co-ordinated approaches by areas with similar concerns, in principle, should be encouraged.**

   Given the competing claims of a variety of perspectives to inclusion in curriculum development, co-ordinated approaches should be encouraged both in curriculum content and in issues of equity. 'Equal opportunity' and 'multicultural' committees in schools should not be like ships that pass in the night (which in many instances they seem to be) but should be allies in furthering the same cause.

   Similarly issues or racism, inequality, power and personal conflict are all common to the broad areas of peace education, development education, multicultural education and issues in Aboriginal education. Ways of examining central concepts and ideas need to be explored and developed.

8. **Parent participation needs to be carefully planned.**

   Parents need clear, succinct information about school programs, especially when their children first attend a school. They need some explanation of why such programs exist and why they are taught in particular ways. They need the same information about assessment, promotion and discipline, and they need it in their own language.

   Providing information is just the beginning of the task. Parents should have the opportunity to make their views known about the same issues and to hear what other parents think. This means that schools not only have to provide the right facilities and resources for this to happen but have to consider the status of these meetings - parents and teachers should be equal partners in a dialogue about education, prepared to be influenced by each other, and not regarding the situation as one in which a particular set of views should 'triumph'. Educational matters are not always questions of professional expertise, they are often questions of value judgement.

Documentation and dissemination of successful programs is vital.

This process not only ensures that a lot of valuable experience is not lost, but is a form of positive reinforcement for the schools involved and is more likely to influence the practice of other schools who would almost always rather hear from practitioners than experts.

Documentation takes time, particularly if it is to be useful to other people, so schools need time release money to assist them in this work. The value of funding and encouraging this aspect of school curriculum development is not just its usefulness to other teachers and schools, but the opportunity it provides for schools to improve their own teaching and curriculum development.

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